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AUTHOR Reynolds, Larry J.; Van Noy, Fred
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ABSTRACT

This report describes school and departmental changes that supported newly stated goals in a junior high school that departed radically from its traditional program. New goals for this particular school focused on the individual, and program agents were charged with helping each student (1) become his own agent, (2) become personally involved in his learning, (3) develop confidence in himself and others, and (4) find true satisfaction in learning. Data were obtained from informal interviews with both administrators and teachers and from an examination of pertinent school documents. Discussed are scheduling changes, class organization and content, grade reports, noncredentialed personnel utilization, teacher role change, student initiated classes, and time and energy demands on the staff. (MLF/Author)

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Larry J. Reynolds
Fred Van Noy

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A WORKING PAPER

Larry J. Reynolds, Fred Van Noy

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Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration
University of Oregon Eugene, Oregon

The following is a report or a descriptive study of educational change within a junior high school. The study was undertaken to provide information to facilitate a broader project--the formulation of a conceptual language for the study of educational innovation. The particular junior high school program described below was selected for study because it represented a major departure from its traditional program of the past and involved the entire student and staff population.

The junior high school is located in a city of over 75,000 in population and is one of 8 junior high schools in the district. It is located essentially in a white-collar neighborhood, although the attendance area does provide a wide range in socio-economic background of the students. The school has an enrollment of about 800 students, with just over 40 staff members. The staff is basically a young staff with fewer than five years of experience. The yearly turnover in staff, however, is low.

The data for this report were obtained by informal interviews with both administrators and teachers and by the examination of several school documents. The authors explained their desire to learn about the new program, but asked no specific questions about individuals or departments. Questions were asked only to clarify previous statements by the person interviewed. The interviews were scheduled throughout the school year.

Guiding Philosophy

The new program represents an attempt at institution-wide changes and stems from a basic philosophical position adopted by the administration and staff of the school. This philosophy was developed within this one junior high school. It was not a district product nor adopted by any other junior

high school in the district. For two years prior to the implementation of the program, the school had been involved (through summer workshops, staff meetings, and various specific changes in curriculum) in the development of a total school philosophy. This philosophy provided the school with the rationale for program changes and was the initial step which led to the structural and curricular changes in the school's instructional program.

The philosophical statement on the goals of the junior high school stressed the development by each pupil of agency, motivation, creativity, and scholarship.

GOALS
WITH FOCUS ON THE INDIVIDUAL[1]

... to help each student become his own agent, learn how to take charge of the development of his own potential, and to understand that only he, in the long run, is responsible for his learning.	AGENCY
... to help each student become personally involved in his learning--to be free to actively explore his own resources and those of the school and the larger environment.	MOTIVATION
... to help each student develop enough confidence in himself and in others to be able to think imaginatively and explore openly ideas, values, and relationships.	CREATIVITY
... to help each student find true satisfaction in learning, and to understand that the subject matter skills acquired are not only useful in themselves, but are tools with which to meet situations and solve problems.	SCHOLARSHIP

[1]From a bulletin to the parents of the school explaining the new program for the coming year.

These four goals were the basis for evaluating the structure and content of the instructional program in this junior high school. Because the existing program was not consistent with the philosophy, the school requested and received permission to alter its program. A three-year trial program was initiated which was substantially different from the program in the other district junior high schools.

Program Continuity

Implementation of the philosophy by a concrete program was accomplished by retaining basically the traditional structure of the school. The self-contained classroom, the 8-period day, and the roles of the department chairmen, guidance counselors, and administrators existed much as before. There was not an increase in the number of personnel in the school either by the addition of personnel in existing roles or by the addition of other types of personnel such as teacher aides. Teachers continued to teach alone, to the same group of pupils in each class, and to the same classes for the entire quarter. The teaching "load" remained the same; 7 periods a day with 1 period for "preparation." It is important to understand the continuity as well as the changes in the program, for the teachers, students, and the program in general.

Specific Changes--The House

The basic structural division of students under the new plan is by the assignment to a House, which is a group of about 20 students and one teacher. The assignment to each House is on a random basis; that is, there is no attempt to group students by grade, age, ability, or sex. The House meets each morning for a period of 23 minutes. These assignments last for the entire school year, and each teacher serves as a House Master.

Although the House retained the "homeroom" activities of keeping attendance, testing, and reading announcements from the office, the House served other functions. For example, the House Master or teacher is responsible for the academic program of each student in that House. In this respect, the House Master serves as guidance counselor in assisting each student in selecting his general plan of study as well as his specific courses for each quarter. Students who are experiencing difficulties with their studies also receive assistance from the House Master, who may then consult with other teachers, guidance counselors, or parents.

The counseling role of the House Master is regarded as the central and most important aspect of the House. The increased and prolonged interaction between one teacher and a small group of students is perceived by the program to be critical in the development of better teacher-student communication and understanding. The counseling role is primarily concerned with the academic program, but includes an entire range of other aspects of the student's relationships within the school.

The House also serves as a central collection agency for the evaluation reports from all the student's classes. This function is not only a clerical one, but is supportive of the counseling activities of the House Master.

The House Master is also perceived by many parents as the person responsible for their child's program and progress in school. Frequently, the House Master serves as the communication link between the home and the school. The House Master's contact with parents concerning a child's problems at school has replaced the initial contact through the principal or guidance counselor.

The specific House activities vary from one House to another. The goals are numerous and abstract enough to allow for differential interpretation by the House Master concerning the means by which these goals are to be attained. Group discussions, individual counseling, and more formal projects may be directed toward aiding understanding of the student's responsibilities, his perceptions and reactions toward events and situations within the school, and of his academic program.

Scheduling of Classes

Classes are scheduled on an 8-period day with each period consisting of 40 minutes. Courses are built on a 9-week basis with four, 9-week quarters making up the school year.

The program provides for flexible schedules by providing "A" days and "B" days. "A" days alternate with "B" days throughout the school year. For example, during Week 1, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday will be "A" days and Tuesday and Thursday will be "B" days; during Week 2, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday will be "B" days and Tuesday and Thursday will be "A" days; Week 3 will be like Week 1, and Week 4 like Week 2 and so on throughout the year.

This form of scheduling allows for 1) some classes to meet daily while others will alternate; 2) some classes to meet for 40 minutes every day, or for 80 minutes on alternate days; and 3) some classes to meet for 80 minutes daily and others for 40 minutes every other day.

The Organization of Classes[2]

The changes in the academic program are best understood when compared to the program of the previous year. The traditional pattern of required courses and pupil assignment is described below.

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[2]The following information was obtained from the junior high's 1969-70 Handbook.

GRADE 7

Language Arts Social Studies	3 period block, with foreign language option taken out of block time
Math	1 period
Physical Ed.	1 period
Home Ec. Science Ind. Ed.	1 period (1 semester each)
Art/Music	1 period (1 semester each) (Instrumental music optional to replace art and music)

GRADE 8

Language Arts Social Studies	3 period block, foreign language option taken out of block time
Math	1 period
Physical Ed.	1 period
Home Ec. Science Ind. Ed.	1 period (1 semester each)
1 elective	

GRADE 9

Language Arts Social Studies	2 periods
Math	1 period
Physical Ed.	1 period
Science	1 period
2 electives	

The new program has retained a similar structure by the following recommended 3-year program.

Science	1 year
English	2 to 2 1/2 years
Social Studies	2 to 2 1/2 years
Math	2 to 3 years
Home Ec./Ind. Ed.	1 year
Physical Ed./Health	2 1/2 years

Students were allowed both freedom and flexibility in fulfilling the "recommended" program. The number of courses within each department was increased by developing a number of shorter term courses which replaced a semester or yearly course. Students were free to choose from a number of classes in, for example, social studies during the year rather than a single class such as world history. Greater flexibility was facilitated by allowing students of all grades (7-8-9) to participate in any classes offered. The exception to this is found in courses requiring prerequisites or in the department where a course sequence has been retained. The alternatives and electives available to the student varies from department to department. A brief description of the program within each department is presented below.

Art - The Art Department offers an introductory course which lasts 18 weeks. This course is a prerequisite for the other 14 courses offered in Art. Examples of the courses students may choose from are: Weaving (9 weeks), Textile Design (9 weeks), and Sculpture (9 weeks).

English - The English Department offers 26, 9-week courses. There are no prerequisites with the exception of a few sequential classes. Several classes (such as a four course reading sequence) are designed for students who have a weakness in language arts skills while other classes focus upon specific areas of interest such as; Black Studies (9 weeks), Science Fiction (9 weeks) and the Novel (9 weeks).

Foreign Language - The Foreign Language Department has retained the traditional program with sequential yearly courses. Three years of French and Spanish are offered as well as one year of German.

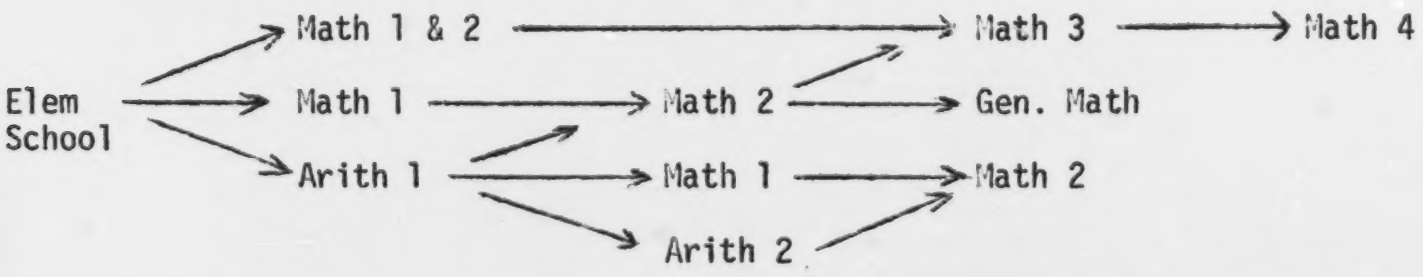
Home Economics - The Home Economics Department offers 23 courses which focus upon specific interests. These courses vary from 3 to 9 weeks in length.

Two 18-week introductory courses are prerequisites for many of the shorter courses. Examples of classes offered are: Tailoring (3 weeks), Child Care (3 weeks), and Consumer Buying Information (3 weeks).

Industrial Education - The Industrial Education Department offers basic sequential courses which are recommended for one year. These classes are in Drafting, Metalworking, Woodworking, Power Mechanics, and Electricity-Electronics. Elective courses are also offered in Small Engine Overhaul (9 weeks), Forging (9 weeks), and Ham Radio (9 weeks).

Mathematics - A minimum of two years is strongly recommended; three years for most students. Since mathematics is highly sequential, a student's probability of success in a specific course is determined primarily by his present achievement level. Registration for a course is made on this basis rather than choice. The appropriate courses for students who were in the district the previous year are indicated by their last year's teachers. Advisors have access to these recommendations, which should be followed unless there are special circumstances that have been studied by the student's advisor, parents, and teachers.

There are three places in the mathematics program where students may start, depending on strength of preparation. The diagram below shows some of the sequences which might be followed.



Music - The Music Department offers one year classes in Band, Orchestra, and Chorus. In addition there are ten 9-week classes available on an elective basis including Folk Music, Musical Theatre Workshop, and Music of Today.

Science - The Science Department offers 12 courses which vary in length from 9 to 36 weeks. There are prerequisites for many of the courses which include Oceanography (9 weeks), Zoology (9 weeks), and Ecology (9 weeks).

Social Studies - The Social Studies Department offers 23, 9-week classes which include Contemporary Biographies, Teenagers and the Law, and Current Events. There are no prerequisites for the classes.

The junior high school also offers two years of typing classes.

Class Content

The class content, as suggested by the class titles, has been altered from the previous program. The class content seems to be a consequence of two interacting influences; the individual teacher's preferences and skills, and the desired knowledge and skills to be developed within the subject matter area.

Each department has developed goals for student learning through departmental discussions. However, the content of each class seems to be a function of the teacher's skills and interests in pursuing specific areas within the departmental subject-matter. The use of a standard text for classes has diminished, while the use of teacher selected and prepared materials from a variety of sources seems to be predominant.

It is possible to look at course content as existing on two levels. Level one is the basic skills to be learned in the class, and level two is the specific content that is used in relaying this to the pupils. Traditionally,

the two are closely related; that is the text is organized by the skills to be developed. In the new program, the materials are not organized by specific skills. Instead, materials are frequently selected because of their interest, and then adapted for use as an independent focus for skill development.

The departure from the traditional textbook orientation is suggested by the following course descriptions of classes designed to be of interest to the junior high school student.

REVOLUTION (9 weeks)

This course investigates the American Revolution and the Civil War as examples of revolutions that succeed and fail. Some comparisons to modern revolutions will be made. The class will consider such questions as: What conditions promote revolution? What are the roles of leadership and propaganda in revolutionary movements? How do revolutionary movements develop? This course will require considerable writing and research work.

HEROES, GODS AND MONSTERS (9 weeks)

Among the earliest and most imaginative stories of mankind are myths. Expressing man's reactions to the world about him, myths have given us a wealth of bold heroes, powerful gods, and ruthless monsters. Students will have an opportunity to read myths of various cultures and will be encouraged to write and dramatize their own.

FOLK MUSIC (9 weeks)

A study of form and style in folk music. Emphasis will be on popular or traditional ballads ranging from "Barbara Allen" and "Lord Love" to "Jesse James" and "Pretty Boy Floyd." Students will be given an opportunity to study the "folk process" in varying versions of several ballads as they have changed through use and transfer, often covering hundreds of years and thousands of miles.
Offered: First and third quarters.

Grade Reports

The use of letter grades has been discontinued. Evaluations of students are based upon individualized and personalized progress, with the emphasis upon the student's own rate of progress rather than upon his standing relative to a group of students.

The evaluation criteria is left to the discretion of the individual teacher and hence varies from teacher to teacher. In general, the form is usually a written statement by the teacher on each student in the class. These evaluations are then forwarded to the student's House Master and the House Master becomes the collection, filing, and distribution agent for the students within that House.

Student Initiation of Classes

The students at the junior high school are free and encouraged to initiate new courses, though the final authority to establish courses remains with the staff and administration. The mechanism by which students may influence the establishment of a course is purely informal. A group of students may take it upon themselves to approach a particular member of the staff regarding the establishment of a new course, but the success of their efforts appears to rest solely with the decision of the particular staff member, department, or administrator.

Non-Credentialed Personnel

The junior high school has attempted to make use of non-credentialed personnel from the community, although state and district regulations place restrictions on this practice. These people generally possess specific skills (i.e., German) which are not found among the credentialed faculty, student teachers from the university, voluntary tutors, or other special program personnel. In all cases, the formal responsibility for courses where non-credentialed personnel are used remains with the certified classroom teachers in charge of these courses.

From Specific to General Changes

The discussion has thus far focused upon the specific changes that have been made in the school program. That is, those changes in the organization of the program of the school and the changes that have occurred within the classroom. It is important to note that the junior high school has witnessed other more general changes, such as the changes in expectations in teacher-pupil interaction, students being listened to in their ideas about school-related matters, teachers being open in communicating with students, etc. These represent changes in the interpersonal relationships between the student and the teachers and exist not only during classes, but in interactions outside of the classroom. The success of these attempts, and even the extent to which they are practiced, is an individual matter and not dependent upon the academic program of the school. These changes of a more general nature are perhaps "invisible changes" in that they do not require alterations in classes, schedules, materials and methods of teaching; but rather the behavior of people within the academic setting.

Teacher Role Change

Although the teacher continued to function within a self-contained classroom, there were several changes in the expectations for teacher behavior.

The teacher was expected to exercise greater discretion in decision-making authority in both the classes taught and in the content and activities of those classes. The rationale underlying the changes in the instructional program also suggested a difference for the teacher interrelationships with pupils. The teacher was expected to be less authoritarian and more receptive to student ideas, problems, and interests. Both of these role changes suggested that the previous patterns of behavior of the teacher were no longer adequate.

The emphasis became one of flexibility both in the academic and interpersonal relationships with students.

The same structure which allowed a freedom to alter role relations within the classroom also allowed a freedom not to change, as well. The expectations for pupil behavior were altered by the philosophy of the school; the changes in materials, activities, and evaluation within the classroom supported these changes in practice. However, it is important to note that for some teachers and some classes it appeared that there was little alteration in either activities, materials, or evaluations.

Abstractness of the Philosophy[3]

The goals of the new program were of an abstract nature, i.e., the development of pupil responsibility in academic decision-making and increasing student motivation by a focus upon student interests. The specific means by which these goals were to be attained were only partially provided in the structure of the academic program. The attainment of these goals was also dependent upon the specific classes offered, the types of teaching activities selected, and other considerations within the classroom. It was possible, therefore, for a great range of specific means to be adopted which were felt to be effective in achieving the abstract goals.

Time and Energy Demands

Because of the flexibility within the structure of the school there was a high level of demand upon the staff in terms of time and energy. The demands

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[3]This factor was suggested by the work of Louis M. Smith and Pat M. Keith in Social Psychological Aspects of School Building Design. Final Report of CRP Project #S-233. Washington: U.S. Office of Education, 1967.

upon the teacher seemed to stem from two sources: 1) those from within the classroom, such as the search for and preparation of materials as well as the usual pressures of instruction; and 2) those external to the classroom, such as the cooperative planning and evaluation on a department-wide and school-wide basis. The extra-classroom problems may also be of two types: 1) points of interaction with other teachers (who will teach what) and 2) concerns that affect each teacher individually but are experienced by a majority of the teachers in the school (House functioning and adequate time for the preparation of evaluation reports).

In response to these demands, the time spent by teachers in outside classroom teaching activities was increased. This time was spent either working on individual concerns or on issues involving the department or the entire school. The number of meetings increased in order to identify problems and cooperatively determine their solutions. As a result of these activities, revisions in the program were evidenced during the year. Some classes were repeated because of their popularity with students and others dropped as teachers reevaluated their demand and value.

Other changes were indicative of problems of standardization. An administrative change was imposed as the result of scheduling difficulties with courses which were shorter than 9 weeks. Classes were standardized to 9-weeks in length. Another problem stemmed from the additional time required by the new evaluation reports. Teachers indicated a need for release time in order to give the reports the time and attention required. This released time was dependent upon central office approval, which was granted.

Much of the success of the new program is dependent upon the teaching activities within each individual classroom. The emphasis upon student

interests, problem-solving, responsibility, and decision-making required more than changes in the class structure and content. The extent to which the individual classroom teachers addressed themselves to activities supportive of the new philosophy was beyond the scope of this descriptive study. The intent was to study the school and departmental changes which were supportive of the means to achieve the newly stated goals. The impression was that a deep commitment by the staff to the behaviors required to implement the philosophy did exist.